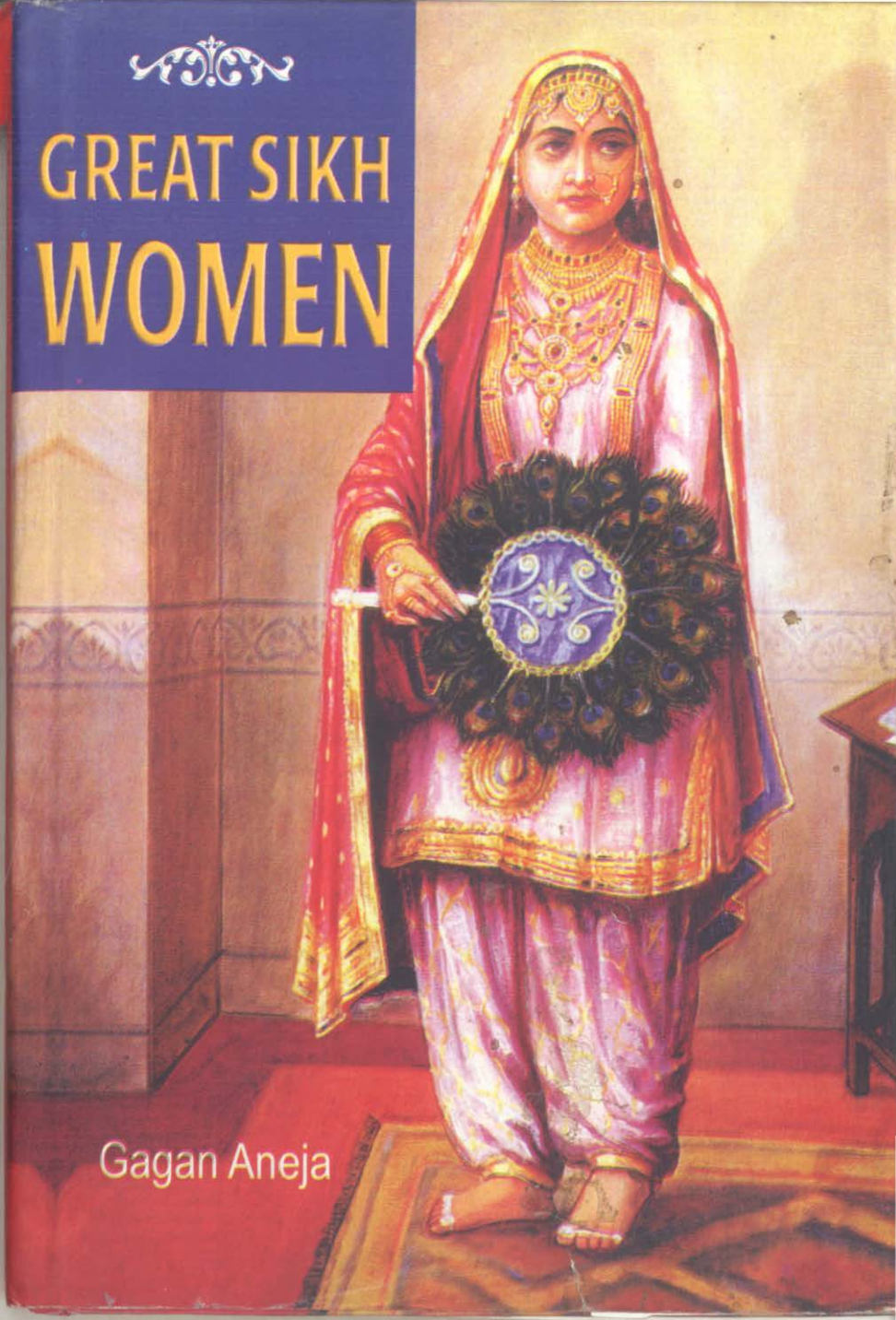
GREAT SIKH WOMEN



Gagan Aneja

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Great Sikh Women

by

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My dearest daughter Sukhmann
And
To my dearest sister Inderbir Kaur Kohli, &
Respected Bhai Sahib Bachittar Singh ji.

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Part - I

Introduction

Sikh woman have played a glorious part in Sikh history. Sikh history holds stories of the many women who helped in many ways to shape the faith. In Sikhism Sikh women are the foundational basis of the Sikh religious life. Sikh women always have been and will be backbone of the Khalsa Panth The equality of woman with a man is a fundamental principal of Sikhism.

Sikh women have proven themselves as equal in service, devotion, sacrifice and bravery. Examples of their moral dignity, service and self sacrifice are and will remain a source of inspiration.

Guru Nanak Dev ji, founder of Sikh religion, said men and women are equal and therefore women cannot be considered socially or spiritually inferior. In one of

his hymns, he said:

Of woman are we born,
Of woman conceived,
To woman engaged,
To woman married.
Woman we befriended,
by woman the future generations come.
When a women dies,
a woman is sought for.

(Guru Nanak, Raag Aassa Mehla 1, page 473)

ਭੰਡਿ ਜੰਮੀਐ, ਭੰਡਿ ਨਿੰਮੀਐ, ਭੰਡਿ ਮੰਗਣ ਵੀਆਹੁ
ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਦੋਸਤੀ, ਭੰਡਹੁ ਚਲੈ ਰਾਹੁ
ਭੰਡ ਮੁਆ ਭੰਡੁ ਭਾਲੀਐ ਭੰਡਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਬੰਧਾਨ
ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ

_ ਆਸਾ ਦੀ ਵਾਰ, ਪੰਨਾ ੪੭੩

It is through woman that order is maintained. Then why call her inferior from whom all great ones born? A man can never feel secure and complete in life without a women. A man's success depends upon and support of the women who shares her life with him and vice versa.

These are words that were uttered by the founder

of Sikhism. So for Sikhs from that period, there has been compulsion to treat women as equals and gender discrimination was not allowed.

The Sikh Nari Manch UK strongly believes that "if you educate a man, you educate one individual but if you educate a women, you educate the whole family and in the long run the whole society benefits."

Throughout history, Sikh Women have always stood side-by-side joining in every Panthic Seva. We have had a history of Sikh women being head of Sikh congregations (Manjis), and leaders in Sikh Battles and Missles.

Mata Sahib kaur(the mother of Khalsa), Mata Gujri (the wife of Guru Tegh Bahadar Ji, the mother of Guru Gobind Singh ji, the grandmother of 4 SahibZaadey), Mai Bhag Kaur (Guru Gobind Singh ji's bodyguard), and the countless Sikh women throughout our history that have planted the seed and inspired love for Sikhism in our children. In Ardaas we daily speak of the Sikh men and women who have given their ultimate sacrifice for the Seva of the panth. Guru Gobind Singh Ji solidified the concept of equality with the introduction of ONE khalsa of Kaurs and Singhs.

Without any doubt, Sikh women had played an equal part in the struggle to keep alive the Khalsa and beliefs. "Our mothers and sisters," they repeat every time in their prayer, "who plied handmills in the jails of Mannu (the Mughal governor of Lahore (1748-53), grinding daily a maund-and-a-quarter of corn each, who saw their children being hacked to pieces in front of their eyes, but who uttered not a moan from their lips and remained steadfast in their Sikh faith- recall their spirit of fortitude and sacrifice, and say, Wahaguru, Glory be to God!" Sikh woman happily would sing the Shabads of Nanak and grind flour whole day but not accepting conversion to Islam as the condition for their freedom. Infant Sikhs were killed by Mughals and their dead bodies given back to their Khalsa mother, not even single mother embraced Islam.

The sacrifice of these Khalsa women was so great that it became a part of daily Ardas in 1760's. Even today Sikhs everybody pay homage to the :

" Singhian jinna ne sawa sawa mann mann de pisne peese, bachiye de tota galean vich pavaye, par Dharm na harriya".

Sikh Women who happily grinded 60 kg Chakki, had to garlands of the dead bodies of their children around their necks but did not let pass the deals of Nanak. Salute to Sikh Women!

Guru Nanak has called woman friend, companion, originator of civilization. Guru Gobind Singh gave the privilege of the kirpan of both women and men.

The secondary status of women was unacceptable to Sikh religion. According to Sikh thought, as all things are created by God, there is no scope for discrimination on the basis of sex. Man and woman are two sides of the same coin - the human race. A man can never feel secure and complete in life without a woman. All human beings regardless of gender, caste, race or birth, are judged only by their deeds.

The Guru's actively encouraged the participation of women as equals in worship, in society, and on the battlefield. Women were participate in any and all religious activities including reading Guru Granth Sahib.

All human beings (men and women) have been called nar (woman/wife) and thus have been considered not only equal, but the one and the same thing. All men

of God are sohagan- a woman who is the beloved of the lord- whether they have the body of man or a woman. Obviously, for Guru Sahib, physical body does not matter. Human bodies are transitory. Hence, the difference between man and women is only transitory- and as such superficial. Guru Sahib talks to everyone and anyone who aspires for a certain degree of quality in life (spiritual, moral, intellectual and emotional). So in Sikh theology, men and women (physical beings) enjoy equal status.

Guru Amar Das abolished the tradition of Sati and Purdah and indeed refused to have an audience with ladies that kept Purdah. He established religious centers and women alongside men were recruited to lead and teach. Guru Amar Das trained missionaries to spread Sikhism throughout the country. According to one account, of the 146 missionaries Guru Amar Das trained and sent out, 52 were women.

At one time the religious seats in the country of Afghanistan and Kasmir were under the jurisdiction of women. These women had complete jurisdiction in decision making as well as preaching to congregations.

Women worked alongside the men in maintaining

the Guru's Kitchen, performing all duties and sitting side by side the men folk in Pangat. In a shabad (hymn) Sri Guru Amar Das says,

"Satis are not those that burn themselves on the husband's funeral pyre;

satis are they, O Nanak, who die of the pangs of separation(GG, 787)".

Guru Angad strongly encouraged the education of women. Women swelled the ranks in spreading the message of the Gurus as missionaries. By the time of Guru Gobind Singh, 40% of them were women.

With the birth of Khalsa the last of the barriers of caste and gender oppression had been smashed. Women through continuing their roles of mothers and wives were forever changed. They were lifted up and given the same amrit at the side of their brothers. They were granted the same 5 k's. Guru Gobind Singh's encouragement of women to keep even shastars, this symbolized that he did not envision her role in society as being that of a "nice, meek housewife," but rather that of a fearless, active, independent warrior, involved in the world. Guru Gobind Singh's wife Mata Sundri led the Khalsa Panth

for many years after passing of the tenth Guru. Jathedar Sada along with Maharaja Ranjit Singh made possible the formation of the Sikh Empire. She described as a first woman commander-in-chief and leader of unprecedented qualities. She gave her contribution to the Amrit, sweet Patashey so that the disposition of the Sikhs would be also sweet. Rani Jind kaur married to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, mother of Maharaja Dalip Singh, first female freedom fighter in the struggle to drive out the British from India. She tried her best to stop British from annexing her kingdom.

Mai Bhago fought side by side with Guru Gobind Singh, was lone survivor of the battle in which fourty Mukte defeated Mughals.

Bibi Khem Kaur A general of Sikh forces that supported a revolt against British in 1849.

Bibi Sahib kaur Phulkian a princess of Patiala. She led armies into many battles and was the only woman in Indian subcontinent to win a battle over a British General.

Bibi Rajinder kaur Princess of Patiala and displayed her chivalry in numerous battles. Mata Tripta ji, the mother of the first, and founder Guru, Guru Nanak Dev

ji. She meditated while carrying the child Nanak in her womb, and brought him up with love and tender care trying to protect him from metha kalu's wrath for being solitary.

Bibi Nanaki, the elder sister of Guru Nanak, was a perfect example. She perceived with her keen sensibility, the prophet-like qualities of Guru Nanak and became the first disciple of the Guru. The Guru was especially close to her and regarded her as his inspiration and mentor. It was she who recognized the divine light in her brother.

The contribution of Mata Sulakhni, wife of Guru Nanak, cannot be ignored. She looked after the domestic matters during her husband's thirty years of preaching and actually implemented the ideals of Guru Nanak.

Another outstanding women in the early Guru period was Bibi Amro, daughter of Guru Angad Dev. She was highly learned and had a thorough knowledge of Shabads (hymns) composed by Nanak, which she sang in the most melodious style.

Guru Hargobind called woman "the conscience of man" without whom moral living was impossible. Child

marriage was discourged and the practice of female infanticide, which had been strongly discouraged, was severely banned.

In regards to dowry: "O my Lord, give me thy name as my wedding gift and dowry." Guru Ram Das, page 78, line 18 sggsji

"Any other dowry offered is a valueless display of false pride and no earthy use." Guru Ram Das, page 79, line 2

"They are not called husband and wife who merely sit together Rather they alone are called husband and wife who have one soul in two bodies."

Women and indeed all souls were strongly encouraged to lead a spiritual life:

"Come, my dear sisters and spiritual companions; hug me close in your embrace. Let's join together, and tell stories of our All- powerful Husband Lord." Guru Nanak, page 17, Guru Granth Sahib.

ਆਵਹੁ ਭੈਣੇ ਗਲਿ ਮਿਲਹ ਅੰਕਿ ਸਹੇਲੜੀਆਹ

(17-16, ਸਿਰੀਰਾਗ ਮ:1)

ਮਿਲਿ ਕੈ ਕਰਹ ਕਹਾਣੀਆ ਸੰਮ੍ਰਥ ਕੰਤ ਕੀਆਹ

(17-17, ਸਿਰੀਰਾਗ ਮ:1)

Spiritual philosophy of Guru Granth Sahib is equally relevant in social matters. Gurbani calls a woman Batees Sulakhani- a woman embellished with thirty two qualities. According to Mahan Kosh, authored by Bhai Kahan Singh of Naba, are attributed to a women Beauty cleaniness, modesty, humility, concord, observance of religion, intelligence, knowledge, service, compassion, truth, dedicated love spouse, purity of mind, patience, frugality, beneficence, sobriety, chivalry, active habits, house decoration, respect of elders, proficiency in music, poetry, painting, domestic science and embroidery, respectful attention to guests and upbringing of children.

Boldness and chivalry are important attributes of a batees- sulkhani, because without these traits a situation that absolutely undesireable with prevail. Guru Granth Sahib says:

Women have become submissive, while men have become tyrants. (p.1234)

Weakness of women will tempt a man to exploit her. He will thus turn into a tyrant. Guru Sahib does not approve of such a situation. If one loses honour in life, impure is all that one eats. (P. 142)

Being a good wife and a good mother does not mean that a women turn her back when the situation demands action on her part. Mata Bhago did the same when the call to act came. Mata Sundari not only took keen interest in Sikh polity, but also successfully guided the destiny of the Panth at a crucial juncture.

Bhai Gurdas poet of early Sikhism and authoritative interpreter of Sikh doctrine, pays high tribute to womankind. "A Woman," he says (Varan, v.16), "is the favourite in her parental home loved dearly by her father and mother. In the home of her in-laws, she is the pillar of the family, the guarantee of its good Fortune...Sharing in spiritual wisdom and enlightenment and with noble qualities endowed, a women, the other half of man, escorts him to the door of liberation."

Sikh history is which has been made by both men and women. Sikh woman has played a glorious part in Sikh history and have proven themselves as equal in devotion, sacrifice and bravery.

The prominent women who occupied place in Sikhism belonged largely to Guru's family. Either as a mother or daughter or wife or sister. Sikh women had played an

equal part in the struggle to keep alive the Sikh ideals and beliefs. The most important part of Khalsa women to raise the Khalsa children who kept the Khalsa alive.

The list of great woman is endless. Some of the great Sikh woman who played an important part in Sikh history. A few are described below. Here is quick glimpse of some of these outstanding women.

Mata Tripta

The history of Sikh women has to start with Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion. Mata Tripta was the mother of the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak Dev. Mata Tripta gave birth to Guru Nanak Dev on April 15, 1469 in the village of Rai Bhoi Di Talwandi, some forty miles west of Lahore in the Shekhpura district of Punjab (Pakistan). A midwife Daulatan assisted Mata Tripta on the occasion. She was reputed to be a kind lady. Watching her son grow, Mata Tripta ji increasingly realized how unlike other children he was. The young Nanak had a sociable nature, and, therefore, had many friends. Mata Tripta often made sweets for him to share with his friends. We know from the oral history tradition that Mata Tripta would sometimes slip him a coin or two to

spend on his friends. She loved her son dearly, but his rejection of tradition and custom was a source of constant aggravation. His parents, who were well-to-do and respected in their community, were greatly disturbed, because they did not understand why he would not conform to social customs of the day. But Mata Tripta played very important role in encouraging young Nanak to pursue his life long mission.

Bibi Nanaki

Bibi Nanaki, the elder sister of Guru Nanak. She was born in Talwandi in 1464. She was only five years old when her brother, Nanak, was born in 1469. He was named after her, and people called Nanak brother of Nanaki. Her father's name was Kalu Ram and mother's Tripta. She was a highly intelligent and pious lady. Many clues suggest that she and her brother were very close. It was she who recognized the divine light in her brother. She was the first disciple of Guru Nanak.

She didn't treat him as a brother, she respected him like a Guru for the whole of her life. She played a vital role in spreading Guru's Nanak's spiritual message and encouraging young Nanak to peruse his life long mission. She was with him throughout the early years of his

childhood. There are many stories relating to their mutual affection and deep faith in her brother's purpose in life. Guru Nanak's father had some materialistic expectations from his son. The elder sister Nanaki gave moral support to her father as well as love and cooperation to Brother Nanak. In this way, the loneliness and the sadness in the hearts of members of her parental family were dispelled.

Bibi Nanaki was married to Bhai Jai Ram from Sultanpur. He was the son of a Patwari, Parmanand. At the age of fifteen, Nanak was sent to live with her sister. He started work in Sultanpur. It was during this time that Guru Nanak received his first revelation. When others thought that Nanak had drowned in the River ben, Nanaki remained convinced that he was an immortal soul and she told everyone else, "That my brother came to this world on a mission and he will not leave until mission is completed."

She is only one who kept faith:

ਇਕ ਨਾਨਕੀ ਤੋਂ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਔਰੈ ਲੋਕ ਸੋਕ ਸਮਾਇ

(ਜਨਮ ਸਾਖੀ)

Besides Bibi Nanaki, all of the other people started to feel sad.

Bibi Nanaki adored her brother. During the rest of their lives, Guru Nanak visited his sister many times. He had promise to visit her whenever her heart yearned to see him:

ਯਾਦ ਕਰੇ ਗੁਰੁ ਸੀ ਨਾਨਕੀ ਪਹੁੰਚੇ ਬਾਰ ਨਾ ਲਾਈ

(ਪੰਥ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼)

Whenever Bibi Nanaki would remember her brother, he would come meet her right away.

(Panth Parkash)

In 1518 A.D. in the month of November as he visited Bibi Nanaki. For Bibi Nanaki this visit was filled with joy, but also with sadness. Bibi Nanaki seeing her end near. She begged her brother to stay little longer. She breathed her last as the Guru's sacred hymn, Japji Sahib, was being recited to her. As she had wished, she departed this life in the presence of her brother Guru Nanak. For Guru Nanak this was his last visit to Sultanpur.

Dr. Mohinder Kaur Gill, A Sikh Scholar has rightly called Bibi Nanaki as the first Sikh in the world.

Bibi Amro

Bibi Nanaki

Mata Sulakhni

Mata Sulakhni daughter of Mul Chand, was married to Guru Nanak Dev ji and they had two sons Baba Sri Chand and Lakhmni Das. She supported Guru Nanak Dev's mission, participatine in Kirtan(hymn singing) and working endlessly to feed the crowds that came to listen to her husband. She agreed to support the family while Guru Nanak Dev ji undertook four long journeys. As wife of the first Guru, her role was important and she fitted very well.

Mata Khivi

Mata khivi was the wife of Guru Angad Dev (the second Guru). She has a special place in Sikh history. She created a loving atmosphere for all whom she came in contact with. Sikh remembers this outgoing women, for her most important contribution that she made concept of langer. She helped create a new social consciousness in Sikh women. She unchained all the shackles of obsolete social norms and dogmatic values. Discarding the tradition of paradah she like men, served the congregation and pilgrims throughout the day.

For her contributions to the tradition of langer, Mata Khivi is described in the Guru Granth as:

ਬਲਵੰਡ ਖੀਵੀ ਨੇਕ ਜਨ, ਜਿਸ ਬਹੁਤੀ ਛਾਉ ਪਤ੍ਰਾਲੀ
ਲੰਗਰਿ ਦਉਲਿਤ ਵੰਡੀਐ, ਰਸੁ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਖੀਰ ਘਿਆਲੀ

ਗੁਰਸਿਖਾ ਕੇ ਮੁਖ ਉਜਲੇ, ਮਨਮੁਖ ਥੀਏ ਪਰਾਲੀ

ਰਾਮਕਲੀ ਕੀ ਵਾਰ, ਪੰਨਾ ੯੬੭

Balwand says that Khivi, the Guru's wife, is a noble woman, who gives soothing, leafy shade to all. She distributes the bounty of the Guru's Langer; the Kheer-the rice pudding and ghee, is like sweet ambrosia. The faces of the Guru's Sikhs are radiant and bright; the self-willed manmukhs are pale, like straw.

Mata Khivi helped to create a new social consciousness in Sikh women. She was a wise advisor for her sons on spiritual and social matters. Mata Khivi had to face a difficult situation when Guru Angad Dev selected Guru Amar Dass as the right heir to Gurship instead of their sons. There was no hesitation in her mind while accepting her husband's decision, but, instead she unbiasedly tried to convince her sons that Gurship was matter of great responsibility and that they were not capable of bearing it. The service of her Guru (husband) was important to her than the indulgence in her chidren.

After her husband's death, she continued to serve the community. She was proud of her children till the day she died. Not only her sons, was she able to inspire many others with devotion towards the house of Gurus.

Bibi Amro

Bibi Amro was a prominent preacher of Sikhism. She was the daughter of Gugu Angad Dev ji, the second Guru. She was born in the village of Khadur Sahib, near Amritsar. She received her early education from Mata kivi. Guru Angad Dev taught her, to read and write in Gurmukhi script. She learnt many sacred hymns from her father. She had been gifted by nature with a sweet voice.

Bibi Amro was married to Bhai Jasoo, the nephew of Guru Amar Das. Bibi Amro parents encouraged her to continue singing sacred hymns and to preach Sikhism. Guru Amar Das, who was Hindu, was quite influenced by her sweet melodious voice when he heard her singing shabads (holy hymns). It was she who first introduced

him teaching of Sikhism. Later Guru Amar Das had made Bibi Amro in- charge of one of his 22 teaching districts called Manjis(cots). What manji meant was that a person who was leading the kirtan would sit on the Manji while the other Sikhs sat on the ground and listened to his/ her preaching's. Bibi Amro serving in her right as the head of a Manji, preached Sikhism with most devotion. There is a tank (man made pond) close to the village of Basarke called the name Bibi Amro da Talab (Tank of Bibi Amro) in her memory. It reminds everyone, Bibi Amro a noble soul, who occupies a special place in the Sikh History once lived there.

Mata Mansa Devi

Mata Mansa Devi was the wife of the third Guru, Guru Amar Dass. Their marriage took place in the year 1502. Mata Mansa Devi was born and brought up on a rich family. Mata Mansa Devi gave a birth to two sons- Baba Mohan and Baba Mohri and two daughters Dani and Bhani. Guru Amar Das at the age of 52 years went to Khadur from Amritsar to serve Guru Angad Dev and sometimes he stay there for the whole year. Mata Mansa Devi was satisfied that her husband was engaged in Guru's service. She helped the Guru in the building of Baoli Sahib (Well).Mata used to look after the preparation of langar according to Guru tradition and on the other she helped in the Kar seva.

Mata Mansa Devi played an important role in the

upliftment of women. Mata Mansa Devi was broad-minded and kind. She played an important role in Guru Amar Dass's mission to spread Sikhism and introduce social reforms. She raised her voice against social evils relating to women. Her contribution in these reforms is admirable.

Bibi Bhani

Bibi Bhani has a unique position in Sikh history. She was an inspiration during the formative period of Sikh history. Bibi Bhani was the daughter of the third Guru, Amar Das. She was married to Guru Ram Das(fourth Guru), and became the mother of Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru. Undoubtly Guru Arjan Dev was brought up as model GurSikh. Guru Arjan's poetry contains a wealth of feminine images as if to underscore the importance of his mother's voice in his life.

ਪੂਤਾ ਮਾਤਾ ਕੀ ਅਸੀਸ
ਨਿਮਖ ਨ ਬਿਸਰਉ ਤੁਮ ਕਉ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ
ਸਦਾ ਭਜਹੁ ਜਗਦੀਸ ੧ ਰਹਾਉ

ਗੂਜਰੀ ਮ: ੫, ਪੰਨਾ ੪੯੬

O' son, this is your mother's hope and prayer, that

Bibi Bhani

Mata Khivi

you may never forget the Lord, Har, Har, even for an instant. May you ever vibrate upon the Lord of the Universe?

Guru Arjan Dev was first Sikh Martyr. Out of love Bibi Bhani, a young girl called Bibi, but out of respect and love, Bhani is mentioned in the Sikh history, as Bibi, whether she is daughter or mother. She was a symbol of service. Sikh remembers Bibi Bhani as strong women. As the daughter, wife, and mother of gurus, she had a profound influence. From her childhood, she spent a lot of time in medication and in the service of her father. She was a devoted daughter of her father. She died in Taran Taran in 1598 at the age of 65.

Mata Ganga

Mata Ganga jee wife of Guru Arjan Dev jee, and mother of Guru Hargobind Sahib jee, was a very devout Sikh. She had her only son that too, after a long time of her marriage. She received Baba Buddha's blessing that her son would be a great warrior whose power no one could tame. Mata Ganga proved that any woman can be worshipped provided she has that qualities of true service and modesty. Guru Hargobind was about eleven years old when the king called Guru Arjan Dev to Lahore. She gladly sent her husband to Lahore to fulfill the high ideals of Sikhism and maintained her dignity in adverse situations when Guru was martyred. She was so strong that child Guru Hargobind could face the tyrant king with a courage. Guru Hargobind was bestowed the Guru

Mata Sulakhani

Mata Ganga Jee

seat. The boon of Baba Bhuddha proved to be true. The child appeared as a brave warrior before her. The life of Mata Ganga told the future generations to never lose equanimity even in adverse times. In deference to her wishes, her dead body was consigned to water (river Beas), as had been her husbands. A Gurdwara stands in her memory at Bakala. Mata Ganga was a living example of confidence and humility.

Mata Damodri

Mata Damodri was the wife of Guru Har Gobind, grand-mother of Guru Har Rai, great –grand-mother of Guru Harkishan and just like a mother to Guru Tegh Bahadur. She was Daughter-in –law of Guru Arjun Dev jee.

Mata Damodri was born to Bhai Narain Dass of Dalla village in 1556 A.D. Bhi Vir Singh in his writings "Life profile of Guru Hargind Sahib" mentions the name of Damodri's mother as Prem Dai. When parleys about Damodri's marriage being held, then the women of the village used to knit phulkaris and Dushalas for offering them to Prem Dai and used to say, 'if you accept our gift as the dowry of your daughter we will consider it as a blessing.'

Mata Damodri's grand-father, Bhai Paro,was a

shinning star of Sikh history with total devotion, service and commitment.

At the time of engagement, (Guru) Har Gobind was ten years old and Mata Damodri was of nine years old. Sardar Randir Singh wrote in "Punjabi Duniya". (June/July 1953) that marriage of Sri Har Gobind and Damodri took place in Dalla village in the 9th day of Magh, the year 1662. On the occasion of this marriage, the residents of Dalla village profusely thanked Guru Arjan Dev that he had blessed them by making a daughter of their village a member of his family. He had blessed them with his Darshan.

Only a short time after her marriage Mata Damodri had to face some serious difficulties. Hardly a year had passed when the Mugal Emperor Jahangir sent for her father-in-law, Guru Arjan Dev, to Lahore and announced that he may never return from Lahore, so the Gurugaddi was then assigned to Guru Har Gobind. Guru Har Gobind was then made the sixth Divine Light of Guru Nanak Dev. So Damodri's husband was now the Guru of Sikhs also and the ten year old Damodri now became Mata Damodri for the whole Sikh congregation. The devotion, love, commitment and wisdom with which she

performed this responsibility was appreciated and praised all over. Five years after her marriage, she faced another challenge, when Emperor Jahangir called Guru Har Gobind to Delhi for a dialogue and imprisoned him in Agra. After announcing a prolonged punishment he confined him under house- arrest in the fort of Gwalior. Mata Damodri faced the whole situation with courage and fortitude. Mata Damodri's service and contribution is worth mentioning at this point. Mata Damodri was blessed with a child after eight years of her marriage. She had two sons- Baba Guruditta and Sri Ani Rai. Bibi veero was their daughter.

Mata Damodri had a profound influence on her children. Her children inherited the same qualities as hers. Like her mother they were extremely patient. Mata Damodri proved herself to be the first wise and expert teacher for her children.

Mata Damodri spent 26 years of her married life in the Guru household and contributed richly to the cultural heritage and glory of Sikhs. In 1631 A.D. the Mata breathed her last at her elder sister Ramo's village Darauli in Ferozepur district.

Bibi Viro

Bibi Viro was daughter of Guru Hargobind ji. She was married to Bhai Sadhu in 1629. She was deeply religious and as well as a warrior like her brother Tyag Mall(Guru Tegh Bahadur). She had five sons. She raised them very well with deep Sikh values. All took part in a battle. Two of them, Sango Shah and Jit Mall sacrificed their lives while defending their faith at Bhagani in 1688.

Mata Kishan Kaur

Mata Kishan Kaur was married to Guru Har Rai and mother of Guru Harkrishan. She was younger daughter of Daya Ram, the resident of Anoop city in the district of Balandshahar in V.P. Her father was a business man and an arch devotee of Guru Hargobind. When Guru Har Rai like his father went on his mission towards Malwa. Mata Krishan kaur had to stay at her- in-laws house and was great help to manage the affairs of Gurdwara as well as her house. She was an humble and peace loving lady. When Guru Har Rai died in very young age. At that time her son Guru Harkrishan was only of 5 years. He was the youngest in age in Guru's chain. Mata Kishan kaur had to face a very tough time. But all the time she maintained her dignity. She took care of her

son with love and tender care. When Mughal king Aurangzeb invited the child Guru at Delhi. She also accompanied her son. She had to witness the scene that child Guru suffered with a small-pox and left for heavenly abode. Guru Harkrishan in his small age used to behave like elders and his mother kishan kaur would watch the calmly. Her role as a mother is very peculiar. She was a mother, a companion and a devotee. She did everything with smilingly.

Mata Gujri

Mata Gujri was the first Sikh Martyr lady in the Sikh history. Mata Gujri's birth took place at Kartarpur district Jalander. Her father was Lal Chand Subhikya, and mother was Bishan Kaur.

Mata Gujri was married to Guru Tegh Bahadur (the ninth Guru). She was an illuminating force behind her husband. Mata Nanaki, the mother-in-law, was greatly pleased to see her beautiful young daughter-in-law become part of the family. She raised the extraordinary child Guru Gobind Singh. She was imprisoned in Sirhind with her two younger grandchildren, and all three died there as a martyrs to the Sikh faith. She was responsible for strengthening faith of the Sahibzadas, who gave their lives for Sikhism, when they were still very young. Her support of her grandsons played such an important role

Mata Jeeto

Mata Gujri Jee

in Sikhism that as Sikhs, we probably owe our existence to her. She was inspiring force during one of the most difficult times in Sikh history. She witnessed happy and extremely sad times as the wife of Guru Tegh Bahadur and the mother of Guru Gobind Singh. She is also distinguished by being the wife of a martyr (Guru Tegh Bahadur), mother of a martyr (Guru Gobind Singh), grandmother of four martyr Sahibzadas (Ajit Singh, Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh, and Feteh Singh). She was about 80-85 years old when she died. She dedicated and sacrificed her whole life for the pious cause of religion.

The minaret where Mata Gujri was imprisoned with the young grandsons is now called Mata Gujri Burj. The shrine of Joti Saroop marks the site where Mata Gujri was cremated December 28, 1704. Her name is uttered with respect and she continued and emphasized the institution of martyrdom in Sikhism. Shashi Bala, reader of Guru Nanak Dev University, writes, "Mata Gujri holds the position of wife of a martyr, mother of martyr, the grandmother of martyrs and herself to martyr." She truly knew how to live. She definitely knew how to die. She remains an aspiration for millions of souls for all time to come.

Mata Sundri

Mata Sundri was the daughter of Bhai Ram Saran, a Kumarav Kharti of Bijvara, in present-day Hoshiarpur district of the Punjab, was married to Guru Gobind Singh on 7, 1741. She gave a birth to Sahibzada Ajit Singh, the eldest son of Guru Gobind Singh.(Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha Mahankosh page 213) According to Dr. M.K.Gill, Mata Sundri was the first wife because she gave birth to the eldest son, Sahibzada Ajit Singh at Paonta Sahib.

She helped provide leadership for the Sikhs in a very difficult time. She nurtured and guided the Khalsa for forty years after the Guru's death. She helped maintain the sanctity of the Guru Granth Sahib as the successor of Guru Gobind Singh. She was deeply spiritual, and was responsible for making scholarship a central part of Sikh life. The Sikhs used to gather in the Haveli of Mata Sundari to celebrate the festivals of Diwali and Baisakhi. This Haveli is known as Mata Sundari Gurdwara. She died in 1804.

Mata Sundri

Mata Jeeto

Mata Jeeto was born in a well –to- do Harijas Subhikhi Kshatriya family in Lahore. She got married in 23, 1734 with Guru Gobind Singh jee. Three sons were born to Mata Jeeto Jee – Jujhar Singh, Zorwar Singh and Feteh Singh. (Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha in Mahan Kosh page 525) In Guru Shobha, Senapati has briefly mentioned about marriage of Mata Jeeto but has again omitted the date on which this marriage was solemnized.

There is reference to Mata Jeeto's marriage in Pyara Singh Padam's works titled Gobind Sagar and Hansraj Rahbar's Rashtar Nayak Guru Gobind Singh. Although the exact date of the marriage has been given by these historians but they agree to the fact that the marriage of the tenth Guru with Mata Jeeto was solemnized at the new city known as New Lahore. Kesar Singh Chhibar in Bansavali Nama writes:

"othe nagar Lahore banwaya, Aan Sikhan nun wich basaya,
Samvat Saitran Sou beeta Bittali, Mata Jeeto Beeahi
thi es Challi"

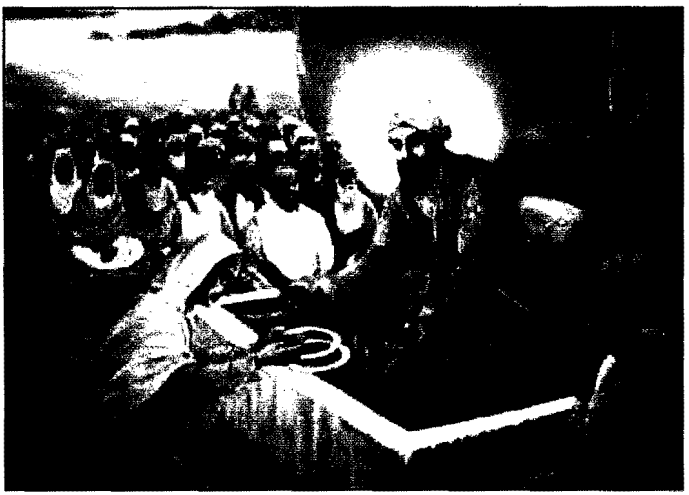
(Bansavali Nama p. 124)

Ancient historians regard Mata Jeeto as the first wife but prof. Harbans Singh in his book titled "Guru Gobind Singh" regards Mata Sundri as the first wife which has been supported by Dr. M.K. Gill in her book titled "Mata Sundri'-a-biography". Mata Jeeto was a great lady. She gave birth to worthy sons who at a very young age, following the footsteps of their grandfather and sacrificed their life for the sake of religion. She spent her whole life in the service of the Guru. The Mata died in 1700 A.D. The tenth Guru performed the cremation of Mata Jeeto at Agampur in Anandpur. A Gurdwara has been built in the memory of Mata Jeeto.

Mata Sahib Kaur

Mata Sahib kaur, daughter of Bhai Rama jee was born in a village called Rohtas, District Jehlum, in west Punjab. She was married to Guru Gobind Singh jee on 18, 1747.(Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha in Mahan kosh page 178) Mata Sahib , the spiritual mother of the Khalsa, Whose name before taking Amrit was Mata Sahib Devan Ji. Her father, who was sewak(devotee) of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, influenced her to the extent that she wanted to devote her whole life in the service of the Guru Sahib. It is said that Guru Gobind Singh got married to Mata Sahib Devan on the request of the congregation (sangat) and no physical relation but only spiritual relation with her. Because of purity, Guru Gobind Singh declared that Sikhs should consider Mata Sahib Kaur as the Spiritual mother

of the Khalsa. Guru Sahib agreed that Mata Sahib Kaur ji could stay with the Guru's family, however they could not marry or ever have children. During the first Amrit ceremony of the Khalsa on Baisaki 1699, Mata Sahib Kaur added sugar cakes in the preparation the Amrit (Holy Necter). Because of her purity, Guru Gobind Singh declared that Sikhs Should consider Mata Sahib kaur as the spiritual mother of the Khalsa. Mata Sahib kaur ji lived in the Guru's household and served Guru ji and Sangat with full Shardaa.(devotion) She accompanied Guru Sahib throughout his life, even during battles, serving him in every possible way. (Daughters of the khalsa)



Mata Sahib Kaur

Bibi Rajani

Part -II

Mai Bhago

Mai Bhago was the brave women who shamed the 40 deserters to return to the battle of Muktsar. All of them achieved martyrdom and blessed by Guru Gobind Singh jee. She led and fought in many battles for Guru Gobind Singh, and also served as his bodyguard. Mai Bhago, wearing a beautiful high turban, fought side by side with Guru Gobind Singh. Mai Bhago had inherited from her family ideals of bravery and courage. Faith, truth, and fearless were her ornaments. She herself took part in the battle at Muktsar, where she displayed courage and skill. Guru Gobind Singh asked her to go back to her village. She expressed her desire to become an active saint solider and stay in the service of the Guru. Her wish was granted and she stayed with the Guru as

a member of his bodyguards. As a revealed in the Sakhi-Pothi, subsequent to the Mukatsar war, Mai Bhago became the part of the Guru's entourage. When, after Aurangzeb's death, the Guru went to the Deccan with Bhadur Shan, Mai Bhago accompanied him. In her childhood, Mai Bhag kaur was called Bhag Bhari, which means "fortunate". In Sikh history she is known as Mai Bhago. She was a symbol of bravery and courage. Bhai Vir Singh claims that Mai Bhago's maiden home was Jhabal but is not sure about Patti being her married home place. According to him, she was tall, well built woman. This courageous woman was always a source of inspiration for her brethren in the rough terrain of the battlefield.

On the other hand Bhai Kahan singh's book " Mahan Kosh" makes no reference to her marital status. But this does not prove that she was unmarried. According to the Sakho Pothi she had gone to the Guru to seek his blessings for male child, but on seeing the Sikhs fighting valiantly on the battlefield, she decided to give up her feminine garb and became a "Fakirni" (wanderer) instead.

Rani Sada Kaur

Mai Bhago

Putan Karan Aayi Ve Piri, Suthan Lah Lai Fakiri"

Gyani Pratap Singh contends that Mai Bhago was married in village Bhure. But this contention is wrong as even the inhabitants of Bhure village reject this view. On examining all the theories it seems that Bhai Vir Singh's contention that her husband's home was in Patti, was plausible. "Twarilhe Guru Khalsa" of Gyani Gyan Singh refers to Mai Bhago as Sahibzada Zorawar Singh's wet nurse. This claim however has not been substantiated by historical evidence.

After Guru Gobind Singh's death, she stayed on in the Decan and made an effort to spread his message in Abchal Nagar (Nanded) and Bidar. Mai Bhago died in 1708. She herself died in Bidar. Her life story always be a milestone in Sikh History. She inspired many brave Sikh ladies to face death with honor. A monument to her memory stands at Hazoor Sahib. Bhai Khan Singh Nabha claims that one of Mai Bhago's weapon (Fala) can be found in Guru Gobind Singh's arms collection kept at Hazoor Sahib.

Bibi Rajni

Bibi Rajni was a noble woman. She was the youngest daughter of Rai Duni Chand. One day she was sitting with her sisters admiring some new clothes, which they all had received from their father. The girls were exclaiming how good their father was to them. Rajni observed that all gifts are ultimately from God. His father was furious. He told his daughters that it was he who loved them and given them everything they had. The angry father, believing her(Rajni) to be an ungrateful wretch, married her to a leper with a taunt that he would see how her God would help her lead a normal life.

The poor girl had accepted her faith worked hard to maintain her crippled husband. She kept repeating the name of God, and she was certain that God was

testing her. She never lost the faith. One day she reached near the pool on her way to a village. She put the basket site of a pool, which containing her husband. She had gone to look for food. Meantime, her husband had seen a black crow dip into the water of the pool and come out white. He totally amazed at this miracle, he crawled up to the edge of the pool and managed a dip. He found himself totally cured. When Bibi Rajni returned, she was amazed to find her husband in good health. At first she was suspected that he might be a different person. But, however he kept one finger with leprosy marks undipped. He showed that finger as a proof of his identity. They both thanked God, and went to the Guru to seek his blessings. The pool was the future site of the Golden temple. It called Dukhbanjani Ber, which means, "the ber tree that destroys sorrow." Sakhi relates that if you keep faith in God then one day all rewards are paid. Bibi Rajni had always kept the faith in Guru and God, being happy with whatever she had and thus was rewarded at the end.

Mata Harnam Kaur

Mata Harnam Kaur, is considered a pioneer in the field of Sikh women's education. She was born to Bhai Bhagvan Das and Bibi Ram Dei in a village in the Ferozepur of the Punjab state. She was mature in childhood by the age of six. She had read many religious books like Panj Granthi. In 1905 she opened a boarding school for girls at Ferozepur. It was really a wonderful development about 100 years ago, when people did not like to send girls outside their homes. In those days education for girls was mostly carried at home. She treated the students like sisters and served them like mothers. It is said she gave head baths to the young girls and washed their feet and clothes also. She helped to raise the status of women and tried to emancipate

them from the shackles and prejudices. Her main stay was faith in God. She was dedicated to the Goddess of education. She was a model of simplicity. But she did not live long to serve the cause to which she had dedicated herself.

Rani Sada Kaur

Rani Sada kaur was the mother- in-law of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Rani Sada Kaur aptly described as a first woman commander-in-chief. She become a young widow when her husband was killed in battle. She used this crisis to transform herself into a woman –warrior. A passionate patriot, Sada Kaur possessed great courage on the battlefield. She led the armies side by side with Maharja Ranjit Singh and helped him to occupy Lahore and conquer other cities. Under her direction and guidance, Ranjit Singh was able to take control of the capital at Lahore without bloodshed. She commanded numerous battles and eventually laid the foundation for the Sikh empire. She played a prominent role in estabilishing the Sikh empire of Punjab. Sada Kaur also administered Sikh institutions of learning. She died in Amritsar in 1832.

Rani Jinda

Rani Jinda was the wife of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and mother of Maharaja Dilip singh, the ruler of Lahore Kingdom. She was the first female freedom fighter in the struggle to oust the British from India. Rani Jinda was famous for her keen intelligence. Rani Jinda was one of the few persons who was intensely disliked and also feared by the British.

After Ranjit Singh's death, four year later, six year old Dilip Singh is the Maharaja of Punjab. She was treated as the mother of entire Khalsa and became a symbol of national dignity. She played a conspicuous role in the Punjab Politics. Rani Jinda's bold speeches and writings rattled the British who jailed her in Punjab, Nepal and Calcutta. She wrote powerful letters from prison to

influential people. Her son was taken to England and converted to Christianity. Later she went England and convinced her son to return to Sikhism. She died in England in 1863 at the age of forty six. Her son Dalip Singh brought her body back to India and cremated her body at Nasik and returned to England.

Rani Jinda

Glossary

Amrit : A Sikh baptism ceremony. Introduced by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. Those who receive Amrit are called Amritdhari and accept the lifestyle and symbols of the Khalsa.

Akhand Path : A nonstop reading of the Guru Granth Sahib that takes place at festivals and other special occasions.

Ardas : the prayer which is said at the end of the main part of all Sikh services.

Bani : word, or speech; the material contained in the Guru Granth Sahib

Diwali : The Indian festival of lights. It usually occurs in October or November and is celebrated throughout India.

Darbar Sahib:		the name of the complex of buildings in Amritsar popularly known as the Golden Temple
Granthi	:	A reader of the Guru Granth Sahib who can also act as a teacher and priest.
Gurmat	:	Sikh teachings
Gurdwara	:	A building where Sikhs meet for worship. " The door of the Guru."
Guru	:	"Teacher." The title given to the ten great human teachers of Sikhism and to Sikh Holy book.
Guru Granth Sahib	:	The Holy book, which is now the Guru.
Gaddi	:	a Guru's seat of authority
Gurbani	:	The Guru's poetry.
Guru Gobind Singh	:	The 10th Sikh Guru, who lived from 1666 to 1708. Before he died, he name the Guru Granth Sahib as his successor.
Harimandir	:	"house of God." The temple at Amritsar, built by the fifth Guru.
Hymn	:	A religious song which praises or thanks God.

Islam	:	The religion of the Muslims. Muslims form the second biggest religious group in India. The Mugal rulers of India were Muslims.
Kaur	:	Literally, princess, a name given to every Sikh female.
Karah Prasad	:	Special food offered to everyone at Gurudwaras.
Khalsa	:	the brotherhood of Sikhs, founded by the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh. Khalsa means "pure."
Kirpan	:	sword or sheath Knife, one of 5 Ks, never called a dagger.
Khanda	:	A double-edged sword. Also the name of the Sikh symbol.
Langar	:	This word means "free Kitchen." The Gurdwara dining hall and the food served in it.
Manji	:	The Guru Granth Sahib's throne.
Nam simran	:	meditation using hymns of the Guru.
Panj Piare	:	The five beloved ones, the first members of the Khalsa.

Purdah	:	The practice of hiding women from the view of men or strangers; also the veil usually worn by Muslim women. This was one of the customs Sikh Gurus tried to abolish.
Pangat	:	Eating in lines in which everyone is equal.
Punjab	:	The region of the northwest India where Sikhism began.
Sangat	:	The Sikh congregation.
Sewa	:	Service, an essential part of the life of every Sikh.
Shabads	:	Hymns found in the Guru Granth Sahib.
Sati	:	A Hindu custom in which a widow was burnt at the cremation pyre of her dead husband. Finally outlawed by the British, it is sadly still occasionally practiced in India by some Hindus.
Vaisakhi	:	Sikh festival coinciding with new year.
Wahaguru	:	The name that Sikhs use for God. Wahaguru means wonderful God.

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